

# Questions and Answers on FDA's Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS)

## What is FAERS?

The FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS) is a database that contains adverse event reports, medication error reports and product quality complaints resulting in adverse events that were submitted to FDA. The database is designed to support the FDA's post-marketing safety surveillance program for drug and therapeutic biologic products. The informatic structure of the FAERS database adheres to the international safety reporting guidance issued by the International Conference on Harmonisation ([ICH E2B \(/drugs/guidances-drugs/international-council-harmonisation-efficacy\)](#)). Adverse events and medication errors are coded using terms in the [Medical Dictionary for Regulatory Activities \(MedDRA\) \(http://www.meddra.org/\)](#). [↗ \(http://www.fda.gov/about-fda/website-policies/website-disclaimer\)](#) terminology.

## How does FDA use the information in FAERS?

FAERS is a useful tool for FDA for activities such as looking for new safety concerns that might be related to a marketed product, evaluating a manufacturer's compliance to reporting regulations and responding to outside requests for information. The reports in FAERS are evaluated by clinical reviewers, in the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) and the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER), to monitor the safety of products after they are approved by FDA.

If a potential safety concern is identified in FAERS, further evaluation is performed. Further evaluation might include conducting studies using other large databases, such as those available in the [Sentinel System. \(/sentinel-initiative-transforming-how-we-monitor-product-safety\)](#). Based on an evaluation of the potential safety concern, FDA may take regulatory action(s) to improve product safety and protect the public health, such as updating a product's labeling information, restricting the use of the drug, communicating new safety information to the public, or, in rare cases, removing a product from the market.

## Who sends reports to FAERS?

Healthcare professionals, consumers, and manufacturers submit reports to FAERS. FDA receives voluntary reports directly from healthcare professionals (such as physicians, pharmacists, nurses and others) and consumers (such as patients, family members, lawyers and others). Healthcare professionals and consumers may also report to the products' manufacturers. If a manufacturer receives a report from a healthcare professional or consumer, it is required to send the report to FDA as specified by regulations.

## How can I report an adverse event or medication error to FDA?

The [MedWatch \(https://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/default.htm\)](#) website provides information about [voluntary and mandatory reporting \(https://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/HowToReport/default.htm\)](#).

## Can mandatory reporters submit adverse events electronically?

Yes, the [FDA Adverse Events Reporting System \(FAERS\) Electronic Submissions \(/drugs/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers-electronic-submissions\)](#) website provides drug and therapeutic biological product manufacturers, distributors, packers, and other interested parties with information about FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS) electronic submissions and instructions on how to electronically submit post-marketing individual case safety reports (ICSRs), with and without attachments.

## Does FAERS data have limitations?

Yes, FAERS data does have limitations. First, there is no certainty that the reported event (adverse event or medication error) was due to the product. FDA does not require that a causal relationship between a product and event be proven, and reports do not always contain enough detail to properly evaluate an event. Furthermore, FDA does not receive reports for every adverse event or medication error that occurs with a product. Many factors can influence whether an event will be reported, such as the time a product has been marketed and publicity about an event. There are also duplicate reports where the same report was submitted by a consumer and by the sponsor. Therefore, FAERS data cannot be used to calculate the incidence of an adverse event or medication error in the U.S. population. For more information, please refer to the question “[What points should I consider while viewing the dashboard content? \(https://fis.fda.gov/extensions/fpdwidgets/2e01da82-13fe-40e0-8c38-4da505737e36.html#\\_Toc493751926\)](https://fis.fda.gov/extensions/fpdwidgets/2e01da82-13fe-40e0-8c38-4da505737e36.html#_Toc493751926)”

## Is FAERS data available to the public?

FAERS data is available to the public in the following ways:

- [FAERS dashboard \(/drugs/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers-public-dashboard\)](/drugs/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers-public-dashboard): a highly interactive web-based tool that allows for the querying of FAERS data in a user friendly fashion.
- [FAERS data files \(/drugs/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers-latest-quarterly-data-files\)](/drugs/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers-latest-quarterly-data-files): provides raw data consisting of individual case safety reports extracted from the FAERS database. A simple search of FAERS data cannot be performed with these files by persons who are not familiar with the creation of relational databases.
- Individual case safety reports from the FAERS database can also be obtained by sending a [Freedom of Information \(FOI\) request to FDA \(/how-make-foia-request\)](/how-make-foia-request).

## How do I find or confirm my report is in FAERS?

To confirm that your report is in FAERS, please send a [Freedom of Information \(FOI\) request to FDA \(/how-make-foia-request\)](/how-make-foia-request).

## What are the benefits of the FAERS public dashboard?

This tool makes the data easier to query and produces user-friendly information and charts. For example, users can view a summary of adverse event reports received from 1968 to the present or for a specific timeframe. In addition, users can search on a product of interest within a specific timeframe.

## Will there be a tutorial so I can learn how to use this database?

Yes, a [recorded webinar \(/about-fda/pharmacy-student-experiential-program/fda-drug-topics-fda-adverse-events-reporting-system-faers-public-dashboard-january-30-2018\)](/about-fda/pharmacy-student-experiential-program/fda-drug-topics-fda-adverse-events-reporting-system-faers-public-dashboard-january-30-2018) is available which reviews the capabilities, and limitations, of the FAERS public dashboard.

## Is the FAERS public dashboard accessible on an Android™ or iPhone®?

Yes, but the user interface layout may not be very user friendly. FDA will continue to work on the dashboard to make the user interface Android and iPhone friendly.

## Can I download my search results from the dashboard?

Yes, you will be able to export a limited set of search data to an Excel® spreadsheet and then download it. FDA will still continue to provide the [FAERS Latest Quarterly Data Files \(/drugs/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers-latest-quarterly-data-files\)](/drugs/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers-latest-quarterly-data-files) online.

Note: The data fields listed on the FAERS Dashboard currently is a subset of the data fields available in the FAERS Quarterly Data files. Future release of the FAERS Dashboard plans to make the other data fields available. Also the data displayed in the FAERS Dashboard may not be identical to the data in the FAERS Quarterly Data files due to different data extraction dates.

## Where else can I find safety information?

- [Potential Signals of Serious Risks/New Safety Information Identified from the FDA Adverse Event Reporting System \(FAERS\): quarterly reports on potential serious side effects identified by FAERS. \(/drugs/fda-adverse-event-reporting-system-faers/potential-signals-serious-risksnew-safety-information-identified-fda-adverse-event-reporting-system\)](#)
- [Post-marketing Drug and Biologic Safety Evaluations \(/drugs/surveillance/postmarket-drug-and-biologic-safety-evaluations\)](#): provides summary information about ongoing and completed post-marketing safety evaluations of adverse experience reports made to FDA for New Drug Applications (NDAs) and Biologic License Applications (BLAs) approved since September 27, 2007.
- Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER): [Drug Safety and Availability](https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/default.htm) (<https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/default.htm>).
- [Post-market Drug Safety Information for Patients and Providers](https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/default.htm) (<https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/default.htm>).
- [MedWatch: The FDA Safety Information and Adverse Event Reporting Program](https://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/default.htm) (<https://www.fda.gov/Safety/MedWatch/default.htm>).

## How are versions of a case in FAERS handled?

Each unique submission of a case received is assigned a version number (for example, Case #1234567, version 1). The initial version received will be version 1. If a follow up is received on a previously submitted case, then that version of the case will be version 2, and so on. The latest version of a case represents the most current information about that case.

The data is updated quarterly.

## What points should I consider while viewing the dashboard content?

When you view the website output of reported reactions (side effects or adverse drug reactions) for a drug product, it is important to consider the following points:

- **Data Quality:** There are many instances of duplicative reports and some reports do not contain all the necessary information. Duplicate reporting occurs when the same report is submitted by the consumer and the sponsor. The information in FAERS evolves daily and the number of individual cases may increase or decrease. It is therefore possible that the information on this website may change over time.
- **Existence of a report does not establish causation:** For any given report, there is no certainty that a suspected drug caused the reaction. While consumers and healthcare professionals are encouraged to report adverse events, the reaction may have been related to the underlying disease being treated, or caused by some other drug being taken concurrently, or occurred for other reasons. The information in these reports reflects only the reporter's observations and opinions.
- **Information in reports has not been verified:** Submission of a report does not mean that the information included in it has been medically confirmed nor it is an admission from the reporter that the drug caused or contributed the event.
- **Rates of occurrence cannot be established with reports:** The number of suspected reactions in FAERS should not be used to determine the likelihood of a side effect occurring. The FDA does not receive reports for every adverse event or medication error that occurs with a product. Many factors can influence whether an event will be reported, such as the time a product has been marketed and publicity about an event. Therefore,

information in these reports cannot be used to estimate the incidence (occurrence rates) of the reactions reported.

- **Patients should talk to their doctor** before stopping or changing how they take their medications.
- **Patient Outcomes received in FAERS:** These data describe the outcome of the patient as defined in U.S. reporting regulations (21 CFR 310.305, 314.80, 314.98, 600.80). Serious means that one or more of the following outcomes were documented in the report: death, hospitalization, life-threatening, disability, congenital anomaly, and/or other serious outcome. Documenting one or more of these outcomes in a report does not necessarily mean that the suspect product(s) named in the report was the cause of the outcomes.

Importantly, the FAERS data by themselves are not an indicator of the safety profile of the drug.